

A
DISCOURSE

ABOUT

Tradition:

Shewing what is meant by it,

AND WHAT

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Is to be Received,

AND WHAT

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Is to be Rejected.

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LONDON:

Printed for R. H. and F. G. and are to be
Sold by *Abel Swalle* at the *Unicorn* in St.
Pauls Church-yard, 1685.

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AN obligation being laid upon us at our Baptism, to believe and to doe the whole will of God, revealed unto us by Christ Jesus; it concerns every one that would be saved, to enquire where that whole, intire will of God is to be found? where he may so certainly meet with it, and be so informed about it, that he may rest satisfied he hath it all?

And there would be no difficulty in this matter, had not the worldly interests of some men, raised controversies about it; and made that intricate and perplexed, which, in it self, is easie and plain. For the Rehearsal of the *Apostles Creed* at Baptism, and of that alone; as a Summary of that Faith, whose sincere profession intitles us to the Grace there conferred; warrants the Doctrine of the *Church of England*, in its VI. Article, that the *Holy Scripture* containeth all things necessary to Salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an Article

of Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to Salvation.

But this strikes off so many of the Doctrines of the present Roman Church, which are not to be found in the Scripture, nor have any countenance there; that they are forced to say: *the faith once delivered to the Saints* (mentioned by *S. Jude*) is not intirely delivered in the Scripture; but we must seek for the rest in the Traditions of the Church. Which Traditions, say they, are to be received as a part of the Rule of Faith, with the same Religious reverence that we do the Holy Scripture.

Now, though this is not really the bottom of their hearts. (as will appear before I have done) but they finally rest for their satisfaction in matters of Faith somewhere else; yet this being plausibly pretended by them, in their own justification, that they follow Tradition; and in their accusations of us, that we forsake Tradition: I shall briefly let all our people see, who are not willing to be deceived, what they are to judge and say in this business of Tradition. About which a great noise is made, as if we durst not stand to it, and as if they of the Roman Church stedfastly kept it, without any variation: neither of which is true, I shall plainly shew in this short Discourse.

The meaning of the word.

Which for clearness sake shall begin with the meaning of the word **TRADITION**: which in English is no more than *delivering* unto another; and by a Figure signifies, *the matter which is delivered*; and among Christians *the Doctrine of our Religion* delivered to us. And there being two ways of delivering Doctrines to us, either by *writing* or by *word of mouth*;

it signifies either of them indifferently: the *Scriptures*, as you shall see presently, being *Traditions*. But custom hath determined this word to the last of these ways, and distinguished *Tradition* from *Scriptures*, or writings: at least from the Holy Writings; and made it signify that which is not delivered in the Holy Scriptures, or writings. For though the Scripture be Tradition also, and the very first *Tradition*, and the fountain of all true and legitimate Antiquity; yet in common language *Traditions* now are such ancient Doctrines, as are conveyed to us some other way: whether by word of mouth, as some will have it, from one generation to another; or by humane Writings, which are not of the same authority with the Holy Scriptures.

How to judge of them.

Now there is no better way to judge aught of such Traditions, than by considering these *four* things.

First, The Authours of them, whence they come.

Secondly, The matter of them.

Thirdly, Their Authority.

Fourthly, The means by which we come to know, they derive themselves from such Authours, as they pretend unto: and consequently have any authority, to demand admission into our belief.

I. For the First of these, every body knows and confesses, that all Traditions suppose some *Author*, from whom they originally come, and who is the deliverer of those Doctrines to Christian people: who being told by the present Church, or any person in it, that such and such Doctrines are to be received, though

not contained in the Holy Scriptures, because they are *Traditions*; ought in Conscience to inquire from whom those *Traditions* come, or who first delivered them: By which means they will be able to judge, what credit is to be given to them, when it is once cleared to them, from what Authours they really come. Now whatsoever is delivered to us in Christianity, comes either from *Christ*, or from his *Apostles*, or from the *Church* (either in General, or in part) or from private *Doctours* in the Church. There is nothing now called a Tradition in the Christian World, but proceeds from one or from all of these *four* Originals.

2. And the matter which they deliver to us, (which is next to be considered) is either concerning that *Faith*, and godly life, which is necessary to Salvation; or concerning *Opinions, Rites, Ceremonies, Customs*, and things belonging to Order. Both which, as I said, may be conveyed either by writing or without writing; by the Divine writings, or by humane writings: though these two ways are not alike certain.

3. Now it is evident to every understanding, that things of both sorts which are delivered to us, have their *Authority*, from the Credit of the *Authour* from whence they first come. If that be Divine, their Authority is Divine; if it be onely Humane, their Authority can be no more. And among Humane Authours, if their credit be great, the authority of what they deliver is great; if it be little, its authority is little: and accordingly must be accepted with greater or lesser reverence.

Upon which score whatsoever can be made to appear to come from *Christ*, it hath the highest authority, and ought to be received with absolute submission to it, because he is the Son of God. And likewise whatsoever appears to have been delivered by the *Apostles*

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in his name, hath the same Authority: they being his Ministers, sent by Him, as He was by God the Father; and indued with a Divine Power, which attested unto them. In like manner, whatsoever is delivered by the Church, hath the same Authority which the Church hath: which though it be not equal to the foregoing (the Church having no such Divine Power, nor infallible judgment, as the Apostles had) yet is of such weight and moment, that it ought to be revered next to theirs. I mean, the sense of the whole Church; which must be acknowledged also to be of greater or lesser Authority, as it was nearer, or farther off from the times of the Apostles. What was delivered by their immediate followers, ought to weigh so much with us, as to have the greatest humane Authority; and to be look'd upon as little less than Divine. The Universal consent of the next Generation, is an Authority approaching as near to the former, as the Ages do one to another. But what is delivered in latter times hath less humane Authority, though pretending to come, but without proof, from more early days: and hath no Authority at all, if it contradict the sense of the Church, when it was capable to be better acquainted with the mind of Christ, and of his Apostles.

As for particular Churches, their Authority ought to be revered by every member of them; when they profess to deliver sincerely the sense of the Church Universal; and when they determine, as they have power to do, Controversies of Faith, or decree Rites and Ceremonies (not contrary to God's word) in which every one ought to acquiesce.

But we cannot say the same of that which comes from any *private Doctor* in the Church, modern or Ancient: which can have no greater Authority than he himself was of; but is more or less credible, according.

ding, as he was more or less diligent, knowing, and strictly religious.

4. But to all this, it is necessary that it do sufficiently appear, that such Doctrines do really come from those Authours, whose *Traditions* they pretend to be. This is the great, and the onely, thing; about which there is any question, among sober and judicious persons. How to be sufficiently assured, that any thing which is not delivered unto us, in the Scriptures, doth certainly come; for instance, from *Christ*, or his holy *Apostles*. For in this all Christians are agreed, that whatsoever was delivered by Christ, from God the Father, or by the Apostles from Christ, is to be embraced and firmly retained, whether it be written or not written: that makes no difference at all, if we can be certain it came from Him, or them. For what is contained in the Holy Scripture, hath not its Authority, because it is written: but because it came from God. If Christ said a thing, it is enough: we ought to submit unto it: but we must first know that he said it; and let the means of knowing it be what they will, if we can certainly know He said it, we yield to it.

But how we can be certain (at this distance of time, from his being in the world) that any thing, now pretending to it, was said by Christ, which is not recorded, in the Holy Scriptures; there is the business. And it is a matter of such importance, that it cannot be expected any man should be satisfied without very good evidence of it; but he may very reasonably question, whether many things be not falsely ascribed unto Him, and unto his Apostles; which never came from them. Nay, whether those things, which are affirmed to be the Doctrines of the Primitive Church, and of the whole Church, be not of some later Original; and of some particular Church, or private Doctours in the

the Church: unto whose Authority that reverence is not due, which ought to be paid, and which we willingly give unto the former.

Now according to this state of the matter, any good Christian among us (who is desirous to know the Truth, and to preserve himself from Error) may easily discern what *Traditions* ought to be received, and held fast; and what we are not bound unto, without any alteration; and what are not to be received at all, but to be rejected; and how far those things are from being credible, which the Roman Church now would obtrude upon us, under the name of Apostolical, or ancient Traditions; without any Authority from the Holy Scriptures, or (in truth) any Authority but their own, and some private Doctours, whose opinions cannot challenge an absolute submission to them.

But to give every one, that would be rightly informed, fuller satisfaction in this business; I shall not content my self with this General Discourse: but shall particularly and distinctly shew what *Traditions* we own, and heartily receive; and then what *Traditions* we cannot own, but with good reason refuse. These shall be the two Parts of this short Treatise: wherein I shall endeavour that our people may be instructed not merely to reject Errors, but also to affirm the Truth.

P A R T I.

What Traditions we receive.

I. **A**ND in the first place we acknowledge that what is now *holy Scripture*, was once only *Tradition*; properly so called: that is Doctrine by word of mouth. In this we all agree, I say, that the whole Gospel or Doctrine of Christ, which is now upon record in those Books, we call the *Scriptures*; was once unwritten, when it was first preached by our blessed Saviour, and his Apostles.

Which must be noted, to remove that small Objection, with which they of the Roman Church are wont to trouble some peoples minds, merely from the Name of *Traditions*: which Saint Paul, in his Epistles, requires those to whom he writes, carefully to observe. Particularly in that famous place: *2. Thess. ii. 15.* where we find this exhortation, *Therefore, Brethren, stand fast, and hold the Traditions, which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our Epistle.*

Behold, say they, here are things not written, but delivered by word of mouth; which the *Thessalonians* are commanded to hold. Very true, (should the people of our Church say, to those that insist upon this) but, behold also, we beseech you, *what* the Traditions are of which the Apostle here writes; and mark also *when* it was that they were partly unwritten.

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For the first of these, it is manifest that he means by *Traditions*, the Doctrines which we now read in the holy Scriptures. For the very first word *therefore* is an indication that this verse is an inference, from what he had said in the foregoing. Now the things he before treated of, are the grand Doctrines of the Gospel, or the way of Salvation revealed unto us by Christ Jesus, from God the Father: who *bath from the beginning* (saith he, v. 13. 14.) *chosen you to Salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, whereunto he bath called you, &c.* This is the sum of the Gospel: and whatsoever he had delivered unto them about these matters, of their *sanctification*, or of their *faith*, or of their *salvation*, by *obtaining the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ* (to which they were chosen, and called, through their sanctification, and faith) this he exhorts them to hold fast; whether it was contained in this Epistle, or in his former preaching: for he had not occasion now to write all that he had formerly delivered by word of mouth.

Which afterward was put in writing: for mark (which is the second thing) the time *when* some things remained unwritten; which was, when this Epistle was sent to the *Thessalonians*. Then some things concerning their salvation, were not contained in this Letter: but, *as yet*, delivered onely by word of mouth unto *this Church*. I say, to *this Church*; for it doth not follow, that all Churches whatsoever, were, at the time of the writing of this Epistle, without the Doctrine of the Gospel completely written; because among the *Thessalonians*, some Traditions or Doctrines were as yet unwritten. Which can in reason be extended no farther than to themselves, and to this Epistle; which did not contain all the Evangelical Doctrine, though of the writings, which it is possible were then extant in some other Churches, did.

And, I say, as yet unwritten in that Church; because the *Theſſalonians*, no doubt, had afterward more communicated to them in writing, besides this Epistle, or the former either; viz. all the *Gospels*, and the *Acts* of Apostles, and other *Apostolical Epistles*, which we now enjoy. Which writings, we may be confident, contain the Traditions, which the Apostle had delivered to the *Theſſalonians*, by word: concerning the *In-carnation, Birth, Life, Miracles, Death; Resurrection*, and *Ascension* of our blessed Saviour; and concerning the *coming of the Holy Ghost*, and the *mission of the Apostles*: and all the rest which is there recorded for our everlasting instruction.

And therefore it is in vain to argue from this place, that there are still, at this day, some *unwritten Traditions*; which we are to follow: unless the Apostle had said, *hold the Traditions which ye have been taught by word, which shall never be written*. And it is in vain for us to enquire after any such Traditions, or to rely upon them when they are offered unto us: unless we were sure, that there was something, necessary to our Salvation, delivered in their Sermons, which was never to be delivered in writing; and unless we knew where to find it, as certainly, as we do that which they have committed to writing.

And it is to no more purpose to shew us the word *Tradition*, in other places of Saint Paul's writings: particularly in the *III. Chapter* of the same Epistle, v. 6. where, by *Tradition*, *S. Chrysostome* understands the Apostle's *Example*, which he had given them; and so it follows, v. 7. *for your selves know, how you ought to follow us, &c.* or it may refer to the *commandment* he had given them in his former Epistle *IV. 11.* (which the Reader may be pleased to compare with this) but cannot with any colour be expounded to signify any Doctrines.

trine of Faith, about which the Roman Church now contends with us. For it is plain, it hath respect to their good manners, and orderly living: for the information of which we need go no whither, but to the holy Scriptures; wherein we are taught fully enough, how we ought to walk, and please God in all things.

The same may be said of that place, *1 Cor. XI. 2.* *Now I praise you, Brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep the Traditions (or Ordinances, as we render it, or Precepts, as the Vulgar Latin it self hath it) as I delivered them unto you.* For we are so observant of what he hath delivered, that we are confident, if Saint Paul were now alive, and in this Church, he would praise us (as he doth the *Corinthians*) for keeping the Traditions, as he delivered them; and on the contrary reprove and condemn the Roman Church, for not keeping them, as they were first delivered. And we have good ground for this confidence: there being an instance in that very Chapter, which demonstrates our fidelity in preserving the very first Traditions, and their unfaithfulness in letting them go. For he tells us, *v. 23.* that he had delivered to them, what he had received of the Lord: and that which he received and delivered, was about the whole Communion (as you may read there and in the following verses, *24, 25.*) in both kinds; the Cup, as well as the Bread. Thus, he saith, the Lord appointed it, and thus he delivered it: and this Tradition we keep intire, as he received it of the Lord, and delivered it to his Church, in this Epistle: which is a part of the holy Scripture: whereas they do not keep it, but have broken this Divine Tradition, and give the Communion of Christ's Body and Blood otherwise than Saint Paul delivered, keeping the Cup from the people.

By which I desire all, that love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, to judge which Church keeps closest to the *Apostolical Tradition* (for so Saint Paul calls this Doctrine of the Communion in both kinds; that which he *delivered*, or left as a *Tradition* with them) they that stick to what is unquestionably the Apostolical Doctrine, or they that leave it, to follow those Doctrines (or presumptions rather) which at the best, are very dubious and uncertain?

And farther, I desire all that read this Paper, to consider, whether it be reasonable to think that those Rites, which have no Authority in the holy Scripture (but were instituted perhaps by the Apostles) have been kept pure and uncorrupted; according to their first intention: when those sacred Rites (for instance the *holy Eucharist*) are not preserved intire, which are manifestly ordained in the holy Writings.

And so much may serve for the first thing: for it would be too long, to explain all the rest of the places of holy Scripture, which they are wont to alledge (though the word *Tradition* be not mentioned in them) to give a colour to their present pretences: How pertinently, may be judged by these places now considered.

II. *Secondly* then; That word of God which was once unwritten, being now written; we acknowledge our selves to be much indebted to the Church of God in all foregoing Ages, which hath preserved the Scriptures and delivered them down to us, as his word: which we ought to do unto those that shall succeed us; as our Church teacheth us in its Twentieth Article: where the Church is affirmed to be a *Witness and a keeper of holy Writ*.

This *Tradition* we own; it being universal, continued, uninterrupted, and undenied. Though, in truth, this is *Tradition* in another sense of the word; not signifying the Doctrine delivered unto us, but the manner and means of its delivery.

And therefore, if any member of our Church be pressed by those of the Romish persuasion, with this Argument, for their present *Traditions*, that Scripture it self is come to us by *Tradition*, let them answer thus: Very right, it is so, and we thank God for it; therefore let this be no part of our dispute; it being a thing presupposed in all discourses about Religion, a thing agreed among all Christian people, that we read the word of God when we read the holy Scriptures. Which being delivered to us, and accepted by us as his word; we see no necessity of any other Tradition or Doctrine, which is not to be found there, or cannot be proved from thence: for they tell us, they are able to make, even the men of God, wise unto Salvation.

And if they press you again and say, how do you know that some Books are Canonical and others not; is it not by a constant Tradition? Answer them again in this manner: Yes, this is true also, and would to God, you would stand to this universal Tradition; and receive no other Books, but what have been so delivered. But know withall, that this *universal Tradition* of the Books of Scripture (unto which you have added several Apocryphal Writings, which have not been constantly delivered, as those we receive) is no part of the *Tradition or Doctrine delivered*. That is, no Doctrine distinct from the Scriptures; but only the instrument or means of conveying that Doctrine unto us.

In short, it is the fidelity of the Church with whom the Canon of Scripture was deposited: but is no more a Doctrine, not written in the Scripture; than the Tradition or delivery of the *Code*, or Book of the *Civil Law*, is any opinion or Law not written in that *Code*.

And we are more assured of the fidelity of the Church herein, than the Civilians can be assured of the faithfulness of their predecessours in preserving and delivering the Books of their Law to them: because these holy Books were always kept with a greater care, than any other Books whatsoever; and in the acceptance of them also, we find there was great caution used, that they might not be deceived: all Christians looking upon them to be of such importance, that all Religion, they thought, was concerned in them.

Of which this is an Argument, that they who sought to destroy the Christian Religion, in the primitive times, sought nothing more than to destroy the Bible. Which they were wont to demand, of those who were suspected to be Christians, to be delivered up to them; that they might burn it. And according as men behaved themselves in this trial, so they were reputed to be Christians, or not Christians. And the *Traditours*, as they were called; that is, they who delivered the holy Scriptures into the hands of the Pagans; were look'd upon by Christians as men that were content to part with their Religion. For which there could be no reason; but that they thought Christian Religion to be therein contained; and to be betrayed by those who delivered them to be burnt.

By which I have proved more than I intended, in this part of my Discourse; that in the holy Scriptures, the whole will of God concerning our Salvation, is contained. Which is the true Question between us and
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the Church of *Rome*: Not whether the Scriptures be delivered to us as the word of God, or no, (in this our people ought to tell them we are all agreed) but whether they have been delivered, as the whole will of God. And from that argument now mentioned and many more, we conclude that Universal Tradition having directed us unto these Books and no other: they direct us sufficiently, without any other Doctrines, unto God, and to our everlasting rest.

And if they urge you farther, and say, that the very credit of the Scripture depends upon Tradition: tell them that it is a speech not to be endured, if they mean thereby that it gives the Scripture its authority (and if they mean less, we are agreed, as hath been already said) for it is to say, that Man gives authority to God's Word. Whereas in truth, the holy Scriptures are not therefore of Divine Authority; because the Church hath delivered them so to be: but the Church hath delivered them so to be, because it knew them to be of such authority. And if the Church should have conceived, or taught otherwise, of these Writings, than as of the undoubted Oracles of God; she would have erred damnably, in such a Tradition.

I shall sum up what hath been said in this *second* particular, in a few words. Christ and his Apostles at first taught the Church by word of mouth; but afterward that which they preached was by the commandment of God committed to writing, and delivered unto the Church, to be the ground of our Faith. Which is no more than *Irenæus* hath said in express words. (*L. III. C. I.*) speaking of them by whom the Gospel came into all Nations: *which they then preached, but afterward, by the will of God delivered unto us in the Scriptures; to be, in time to come, the foundation and pillar of our Faith.*

III. And farther we likewise acknowledge that the sum and substance of the Christian Religion, contained in the Scriptures, hath been delivered down to us, even from the Apostles days, in other ways, or forms, besides the Scriptures. For instance, in the *Baptismal Rite*; in the *Creed*; in the *Prayers*, and *Hymns* of the Church. Which we may call *Traditions*, if we please; but they bring down to us no new Doctrine; but only deliver, in an abridgment, the same Christianity, which we find in the Scriptures.

Upon this there is no need that I should enlarge: but I proceed farther to affirm,

IV. That we reverently receive also the unanimous *Tradition* or Doctrine of the Church in all ages, which determines the *meaning* of the holy Scripture; and makes it more clear and unquestionable in any point of Faith, wherein we can find it hath declared its sense. For we look upon this *Tradition* as nothing else but the *Scripture unfolded*: not a new thing, which is not in the Scripture; but the Scripture explained and made more evident.

And thus some part of the *Nicene Creed* may be called a *Tradition*; as it hath expressly delivered unto us the sense of the Church of God, concerning that great Article of our Faith; that Jesus Christ is *the Son of God*. Which they teach us was always thus understood; the Son of God, *begotten of his Father, before all worlds, and of the same substance with the Father*.

But this Tradition supposes the Scripture for its ground; and delivers nothing but what the Fathers, assembled at *Nice*, believed to be contained there; and was first fetch'd from thence. For we find in *Theodosius* (L. I. C. 6.) that the famous Emperour *Constantine*,

the, admonished those Fathers, in all their questions and debates to consult onely with these heavenly inspired Writings: because the Evangelical, and Apostolical Books, and the Oracles of the old Prophets, do evidently instruct us what to think in Divine matters. This is so clear a Testimony, that in those days, they made this the complete Rule of their Faith, whereby they ended Controversies (which was the reason that in several other Synods we find they were wont to lay the Bible before them) and that there is nothing in the Nicene Creed, but what is to be found in the Bible; that Cardinal Bellarmine hath nothing to reply to it, but this: *Constantine was indeed a great Emperour, but no great Doctour.* Which is rather a scoff, than an Answer: and casts a scorn not onely upon him, but upon that great Council, who, as the same Theodoret, witnesseth, assented unto that Speech of Constantine. So it there follows in these words, *the most of the Synod were obedient to what he had discoursed; and embraced both mutual Concord, and sound Doctrine.*

And accordingly S. Hilary a little after extols his Son Constantius for this, that he adhered to the Scriptures; and blames him onely for not attending to the true Catholick sense of them. His words are these, (in his little Book, which he delivered to Constantius) *I truly admire thee, O Lord Constantius the Emperour, who desirest a Faith according to what is written.* They pretended to no other in those days; but, (as he speaks a little after) look'd upon him that refused this, as *Antichrist*. It was onely required that they should receive their Faith out of God's Books, not merely according to the words of them, but according to their true meaning (because many spake Scripture without Scripture, and pretended to Faith without Faith, as his words are) and herein Catholick and constant Tradition

tion was to guide them. For whatsoever was contrary, to what the whole Church had received and held from the beginning, could not in reason be thought to be the meaning of that Scripture, which was alleged to prove it. And, on the other side, the Church pretended to no more than to be a Witness of the received sense of the Scriptures: which were the bottom upon which they built this Faith.

Thus I observe *Hegeippus* saith (in *Euseb.* his History, L. IV. C. 22.) that when he was at Rome he met with a great many Bishops, and that he received the very same Doctrine from them all. And then, a little after, tells us what that was, and whence they derived it, saying, *that in every succession of Bishops, and in every City, so they held; as the Law preached, and as the Prophets, and as the Lord.* That is, according to the Doctrine of the Old and New Testament.

I shall conclude this particular, with a pregnant passage, which I remember in a famous Divine of our Church (*D. Jackson;* in his Treatise of the Catholick Church, Chap. 22.) who writes to this effect,

That Tradition, which was of so much use in the Primitive Church, was not *unwritten Traditions* or customs, commended or ratified by the supposed infallibility of any visible Church, but did especially consist in the *Confessions*, or *Registers* of particular Churches. And the unanimous consent of so many several Churches, as exhibited their confessions to the *Nicene Council*, out of such Forms as had been framed, and taught before this Controversie arose, about the Divinity of Christ; and that voluntarily and freely (these Churches being not dependent one upon another; nor overswayed by any Authority over them; nor misled by faction to frame their confessions of Faith by imitation, or according to some pattern set them)

all agreed, had been delivered to them by the Apostles and their followers, and was the true meaning of the holy Writings, in this great Article: and evidently proved, that *Arius* did obtrude such interpretations of Scripture, as had not been heard of before; or were but the sense of some private persons in the Church, and not of the generality of Believers.

In short the unanimous consent of so many distinct visible Churches, as exhibited their several Confessions, Catechisms, or Testimonies, of their own or Forefathers Faith unto the Council of *Nice*, was an argument of the same force and efficacy against *Arius* and his partakers, as the General consent and practice of all Nations, in worshipping a Divine Power in all ages, is against *Atheists*. Nothing but the ingrafted notion of a Deity, could have induced so many several Nations, so much different in natural disposition, in civil discipline and education, to affect or practise the duty of Adoration. And nothing but the evidence of *the ingrafted word* (as Saint *James* calls the Gospel) delivered by Christ and his Apostles in the holy Scriptures, could have kept so many several Churches, as communicated their Confessions unto that Council, in the unity of the same Faith.

The like may be said of the rest of the *four first General Councils*; whose Decrees are a great confirmation of our belief: because they deliver to us, the consent of the Churches of Christ, in those great Truths, which they assert out of the holy Scriptures.

And could there any *Traditive* Interpretation of the whole Scripture be produced, upon the Authority of such *Original Tradition*, as that now named; we would most thankfully and joyfully receive it. But there never was any such pretended; no, not by the

Roman Church: whose Doctours differ among themselves, about the meaning of hundreds of places in the Bible. Which they would not doe sure, nor spend their time unprofitably, in making the best conjectures they are able; if they knew of any exposition of those places, in which all Christian Doctours had agreed from the beginning.

V. But more than this, we allow that *Tradition* gives us a considerable assistance, in such points as are not in so many letters and syllables contained in the Scriptures, but may be gathered from thence, by good and manifest reasoning. Or, in plainer words perhaps, whatsoever *Tradition* justifies any Doctrine, that may be proved by the Scriptures, though not found in express terms there, we acknowledge to be of great use, and readily receive and follow it: as serving very much to establish us more firmly in that Truth, when we see all Christians have adhered to it.

This may be called a *confirming Tradition*: of which we have an instance in the Doctrine of *Infant Baptism*; which some ancient Fathers call an *Apostolical Tradition*. Not, that it cannot be proved by any place of Scripture; no such matter: for though we do not find it written in so many words that Infants are to be baptised, or that the Apostles baptised Infants; yet it may be proved out of the Scriptures, and the Fathers themselves who call it an *Apostolical Tradition* do alledge testimonies of the Scriptures to make it good. And therefore we may be sure, they comprehend the Scriptures within the name of *Apostolical Tradition*: and believed that this Doctrine was gathered out of the Scriptures, though not expressly treated of there.

In like manner we, in this Church, assert the authority of Bishops above Presbyters, by a Divine right:

as appears by the Book of Consecration of Bishops, where the person to be ordained to this Office, expresses his belief, *that he is truly called to this Ministrati-on, according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Now this we are persuaded may be plainly enough proved to any man that is ingenuous and will fairly consider things, out of the holy *Scriptures* without the help of *Tradition*: but we also take in the assistance of this for the conviction of gain-sayers; and by the perpetual practice and Tradition of the Church from the beginning confirm our Scripture proofs so strongly, that he seems to us very obstinate, or extremely prejudiced, that yields not to them. And therefore to make our Doctrine in this point the more Authentick, our Church hath put both these proofs together; in the Preface to the *Form of giving Orders*: which begins in these words; *It is evident unto all men diligently reading holy Scripture and ancient Authours, that from the Apostles time there have been three Orders of Ministers in Christ's Church, Bishops, Priests and Deacons.*

I hope no body among us is so weak, as to imagine, when he reads this, that by admitting *Tradition* to be of such use and force as I have mentioned, we yield too much to the Popish Cause; which supports it self by this pretence. But if any one shall suggest this to any of our people, let them reply; that it is but the pretence, and only by the Name of *Tradition*, that the Romish Church supports it self: For *true Tradition* is as great a proof against *Papery*, as it is for *Episcopacy*. The very foundation of the Pope's Empire (which is, his succession in Saint *Peter's* Supremacy) is utterly subverted by this: the constant Tradition of the Church being evidently against it. And therefore let us not lose this Advantage we have against them, by ignorantly refusing to receive true and constant *Tradition*:.

tion: which will be so far from leading us into their Church; that it will never suffer us to think of being of it, while it remains so opposite to that which is truly Apostolical.

I conclude this, with the direction, which our Church gives to Preachers in the Book of *Canons* 1571. (in the Title *Concionatores*) that *no man shall teach the people any thing to be held and believed by them religiously, but what is consentaneous to the Doctrine of the Old and New Testament; and what the Catholick Fathers and ancient Bishops, have gathered out of that very Doctrine.* This is our Rule, whereby we are to guide ourselves: which was set us on purpose, to preserve our Preachers from broaching any idle, novel, or popish Doctrines; as appears by the Conclusion of that Injunction, *Vain, and old Wives opinions, and heresies, and popish errors, abhorring from the Doctrine and Faith of Christ, they shall not teach: nor any thing at all whereby the unskilfull multitude, may be inflamed either to the study of novelty, or to contention.*

VI. But though nothing may be taught as a piece of Religion, which hath not the forenamed Original; yet I must add that those things, which have been universally believed, and not contrary to Scripture, though not written at all there, nor to be proved from thence, we do receive as pious opinions. For instance, the *perpetual Virginity* of the Mother of God our Saviour: which is so likely a thing, and so universally received; that I do not see why we should not look upon it, as a genuine *Apostolical Tradition.*

VII. I have but one thing more to add, which is, that we allow also the *Traditions* of the Church, about matters of *Order, Rites and Ceremonies.* Onely we do

do not take them to be parts of God's Worship; and if they be not appointed in the holy Scriptures, we believe they may be altered by the same or the like authority, with that which ordained them. So our Church hath excellently and fully resolved us, concerning such matters, in the XXXIV. Article of Religion: where there are *three* things asserted concerning such *Traditions* as these.

First, *It is not necessary that Traditions and Ceremonies* (they are the very first words of the Article) *be in all places, one or utterly alike: for at all times they have been divers, and may be changed according to the diversities of Countries, times, and mens manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's word.* But then to prevent all disorders and confusions, that men might make in the Church, by following their own private fancies and humours; the next thing which is decreed is this,

Secondly, that *whosoever through his own private judgment, willingly and purposely doth openly break the Traditions and Ceremonies of the Church, which be not repugnant to the word of God, and be ordained and approved by common authority; ought to be rebuked openly (that others may fear to doe the like) as he that offendeth against the common order of the Church, and hurteth the Authority of the Magistrate, and woundeth the Consciences of the weak Brethren.*

Lastly, it is there declared, that every particular or national Church, hath authority to ordain, change and abolish, Ceremonies or Rites of the Church, ordained only by man's authority, so that all things be done to edifying.

This is sufficient to shew what we believe concerning *Traditions*, about matters of Order and Decency.

VIII. As for what is delivered in matters of Doctrine, or Order, by any private Doctour in the Church, or by any particular Church, it appears by what hath been said, that it cannot be taken to be more than the private opinion of that man, or the particular decree of that Church; and can have no more authority than they have: that is, cannot oblige all Christians, unless it be contained in the holy Scripture.

Now such are the Traditions which the Roman Church would impose upon us; and impose upon us after a strange fashion, as you shall see in the *Second Part* of this Discourse: unto which I shall proceed presently, when I have left with you this brief reflexion on what hath been said in this *First Part*.

Our people may hereby be admonished not to suffer themselves to be deceived and abused by words and empty names, without their sense and meaning. Nothing is more common than this: especially in the business of *Traditions*. About which a great stir is raised; and it is commonly given out, that we refuse all Traditions. Than which nothing is more false: for we refuse none truly so called; that is Doctrines delivered by Christ, or his Apostles. No, we refuse nothing at all, because it is unwritten: but merely because we are not sure, it is delivered by that Authority, to which we ought to submit.

Whatsoever is delivered to us by our Lord and his Apostles, we receive as the very word of God: which we think is sufficiently declared in the holy Scriptures. But if any can certainly prove, by any Authority equal to that which brings the Scriptures to us, that there is any thing else delivered by them, we receive that also. The Controversie will soon be at an end: for we are ready to embrace it, when any such thing can be produced.

Nay,

Nay, we have that reverence for those who succeeded the Apostles, that what they have unanimously delivered to us, as the sense of any doubtfull place, we receive it, and seek no farther. There is no dispute, whether or no we should entertain it.

To the Decrees of the Church also we submit in matters of Decency and Order: yea, and acquiesce in its authority, when it determines doubtfull opinions.

But we cannot receive that as a Doctrine of Christ, which we know is but the Tradition of man; nor keep the Ordinances of the ancient Church in matters of Decency, so unalterably as never to vary from them; because they themselves did not intend them to be of everlasting obligation. As appears by the changes that have been made in several times and places: even in some things which are mentioned in the holy Scriptures; being but customes suited to those Ages and Countries.

In short, *Traditions* we do receive; but not all that are called by that name. Those which have sufficient Authority; but not those which are imposed upon us, by the sole authority of one particular Church, assuming a power over all the rest. And so I come to the Second Part.

P A R T II.

What Traditions we do not receive.

I. **A**ND in the first place we do not believe that there is any *Tradition*, which contains *another word of God*: which is not in the Scripture, or cannot be proved from thence. In this consists the main difference between us, and them of the Romish persuasion: who affirm that Divine Truth which we are all bound to receive, to be partly written; partly delivered by word of mouth without writing. Which is not onely the affirmation of the Council of *Trent*, but delivered in more expresse terms, in the Preface to the *Roman Catechism*, drawn up by their order: where we find these words (towards the conclusion of it) *the whole Doctrine to be delivered to the faithfull, is contained in the word of God: which (word of God) is distributed into Scripture, and Tradition.*

This is a full and plain declaration of their mind; with which we can by no means agree, for divers unanswerable reasons.

1. Not onely because the Scriptures testifie to their own perfection; which they affirm to be so great, as to be able to complete the divinest men in the Church of Christ, in all points of heavenly wisdom, 2 *Tim.* III. 15, 16, 17. but

Secondly, Because the constant Tradition of the Church (even of the Roman Church anciently) is, that
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in the Scriptures we may find all that is necessary to be known and believed to Salvation. I must not fill up this Paper, with Authorities to this purpose: but we avow this, unto the people of our Church, for a certain Truth, which hath been demonstrated by many of our Writers: who have shewn that the ancient Doctours universally, speak the language of Saint Paul, *1 Cor. IV. 7. not to think above that which is written.* I will mention onely these memorable words of *Tertullian*, who is as earnest an Advocate as any for ritual Traditions, but having to deal with *Hermogenes* in a question of Faith, *whether all things in the beginning were made of nothing*, urges him in this manner. I have no where yet read, that all things were made out of a subject matter. *If it be written, let those of Hermogenes his shop shew it; if it be not written, let them fear that woe which is allotted to such, as add or take away.* The very same answer should our people make to those, that would have them receive any thing as an Article of Faith, which is not delivered to them by this truly Apostolical Church wherein we live: *If it be written, let us see it; if it be not, take heed how you add to the undoubted word of God.* We receive the holy Scriptures, as able to make us wise to Salvation. So they themselves tell us; and so runs the True Tradition of the Church: which you of the Romish persuasion have forsaken; but we adhere unto.

3. And we have this farther reason so to doe, because if part of God's word had been written, and part unwritten, we cannot but believe there would have been some care taken, in the written Word, not onely to let us know so much; but also inform us whither we should resort to find it, and how we should know it; if it be absolutely necessary for us to be acquainted with it. But there is no such notice, nor any such

directions left us; nor can any man give us any certain rule to follow in this matter, but onely this: to *examine all Traditions by the Scripture, as the supreme Rule of Faith; and to admit onely such, as are conformable thereunto.*

4. For which we have still this farther reason, that no sooner were they that first delivered and received the holy Scriptures gone out of the world, but we find men began to add their own fancies unto the Catholick Truth: which made it absolutely necessary to keep to the Tradition in the holy Scriptures; all other growing uncertain. This is observed by *Hegesippus* himself (in *Eusebius* L. III. C. 32.) that the Church remained a chaste Virgin, and the Spouse of Christ, till the sacred Quire of the Apostles, and the next generation of them, who had had the honour to be their Auditors, were extinct: and then there began a plain conspiracy of impious, atheistical error; by the fraud of teachers, who delivered other doctrine. Which was a thing Saint Paul feared even in his own life-time, about the Church of Corinth (2 Cor. XI. 3.) lest, the Devil, like a wily Serpent, should beguile them, and corrupt their minds, from the original simplicity of the Christian Doctrine wherein they were first instructed. And if it were attempted then; it was less difficult, and therefore more endeavoured afterward: as shall appear anon by plain History; which tells how several persons pretended they received, this and that from an Apostle. Some of which Traditions were presently rejected; others received, and afterwards found to be impostures. Which shews there was so much false dealing in the case, that it was hard for men to know what was truly Apostolical in those days, if it came to them this way onely; and therefore impossible to be discerned by us now, at this great distance of time
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from the Apostles: who we know delivered the true Faith; but we have no reason to rely upon mere Tradition, without Scripture, for any part of that Faith; when we see what cheats were put upon men by that means, even then when they had better helps to detect them than we have.

It is true, the Fathers sometime urge *Tradition* as a proof of what they say. But we must know, that the Scriptures were not presently communicated, among some Barbarous Nations; and there were some Hereticks also who either denied the Scriptures, or some part of them: and in these cases it was necessary, to appeal to the Tradition that was in the Church; and to convince them by the Doctrine taught every where by all the Bishops. But that (mark this, I pray you) of which they convinced them by this argument, was nothing but what is taught in the Scripture.

5. With which we cannot suffer any thing to be equalled in authority; unless we would see it confirmed by the same or equal Testimony. This is the great reason of all, why we cannot admit any unwritten Traditions to be a part of the word of God, which we are bound to believe; because we cannot find any truths so delivered to us, as those in the holy Scriptures. They come to us with as full a testimony as can be desired, of their Divine Original: but so do none of those things, which are now obtruded on us by the Romish Church under the name of *Traditions* or *unwritten word* of God.

For the primitive Church had the very first Copies, and authentick Writings, of those Books, called the New Testament, delivered by the Apostles own hands to them. And those Books confirm the Scriptures of the Old Testament: and they were both delivered to posterity, by that primitive Church; witnessing

sing from whom they received them : who carefully kept them as the most pretious Treasure ; so that this written word hath had the general approbation, and testimony of the whole Church of Christ in every age, untill this day ; witnessing that it is Divine. And it hath been the constant business of the Doctours of the Church, to expound this word of God to the people : and their Books are full of citations out of the Scripture ; all agreeing, in substance, with what we now reade in them. Nay, the very enemies of Christianity, such as *Celsus*, *Porphyry*, *Julian* never questioned, but these are the writings of which the Apostles were the Authours, and which they delivered. Besides, the Marks they have in themselves, of a Divine Spirit, which indited them : they all tending to breed and preserve in men a sense of God, and to make them truly vertuous.

Not one word of which can be said for any of those *unwritten Traditions*, which the Roman Church pretend to be a part of God's word. For we have no testimony of them in the holy Scriptures. Nor doth the primitive Church affirm she received them from the Apostles, as she did the written word. Nor have they the perpetual consent and general approbation of the whole Church ever since. Nor are they frequently quoted, as the words of Scripture are upon all occasions, by the Doctours of the Church. Nor do we find them to be the Doctrine, which was constantly taught the people. Nor is there any notice taken of them by the enemies of our Faith ; whose assaults are all against the Scriptures. In short, they are so far from having any true authority ; that counterfeit testimonies and forged writings have been their great supporters. Besides the plain drift of them, which is not to make all men better, but to make some richer :
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and the manifest danger men are in, by many of them, to be drawn away from God, to put their trust and confidence in Creatures. As might be shewn, if this Paper would contain it, in their Doctrines, of *Papal Supremacy, Purgatory, Invocation of Saints, Image Worship*, and divers others.

Concerning which we say, as S. Cyprian doth to *Pompeius*, about another matter. *If it be commanded in the Gospels, or in the Epistles of the Apostles, or in their Acts, that they should not be baptised who return from any Heresie, but onely be received by imposition of hands, LET THIS DIVINE and HOLY TRADITION BE OBSERVED.* The same say we, if there be any thing in the *Gospels*, in the *Epistles*, in the *Acts*, concerning *Invocations of Saints*, concerning the praying Souls out of *Purgatory*, &c. let that divine, that holy Tradition be observed. But if it be not there, *what obstinacy is this* (as it follows a little after in that *Epiſt. LXXIV.*) *what presumption, to prefer humane Tradition, before the Divine disposition or ordinance?*

A great deal more there is in that place, and in others of that holy Martyr, to bring all to the *source, the root, the original of the Divine Tradition*; for then *humane error ceases*: which original Tradition he affirms to be, what is delivered in the holy Scriptures: which delivering to us the whole will of God concerning us, we look after no other Tradition, but what explains, and confirms, and is consonant to this. For we believe that what is delivered to us by the Scriptures, and what is delivered by true Tradition, are but two several ways of bringing us acquainted with the same Christian Truth; not with different parts of that Truth.

And so I have done with the first thing ; the sum of which is this. We do not receive any Tradition, or Doctrine to supply the defect of the Scripture, in some necessary Article of Faith : which Doctrines, they of *Rome* pretend to have one and the same Authour with the Scripture, *viz.* God ; and therefore to be received with the same pious affection and reverence : but cannot tell us where we may find them, how we shall discern true from false, nor give us any assurance of their Truth, but we must take them purely upon their word.

Now how little reason we have to trust to that, will appear in the *second* thing I have to add : which is this,

II. That we dare not receive any thing whatsoever merely upon the Credit of the Roman Church : no not *that divine, that holy Tradition* before spoken of, *viz.* the Scripture. Which we do not believe onely upon their testimony ; both because they are but a part of the Church and therefore not the sole keepers of Divine Truth ; and they are a corrupted part who have not approved themselves faithfull in the keeping what was committed to them.

Let our people diligently mark this, that Traditions never were, nor are now, onely in the keeping of the Roman Church : and that these things are widely different ; the Tradition of the whole Church, or of the greatest and best part of it ; and the Tradition of one part of the Church, and the least part of it ; and the worst part also and most depraved.

What is warranted by the Authority of the whole Church, I have shewn before, we reverently receive : but we cannot take that for current Tradition, which
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is warranted onely by a small part of the Church, and we give very little credit to what is warranted onely by that part of it which is *Roman*. Because,

1. *First*, This Church hath not preserved so carefully as other Churches have done, the *first and original Tradition*, which is in the Scriptures: but suffered them to be shamefully corrupted. Every one knows that there is a *Latine Vulgar* Edition of the Bible (which they of that Church prefer before the Original) none of which they preserved heretofore from manifest depravations; nor have been able, since they were told of the faults, to purge away; so as to canonize any Edition without permitting great numbers in their newest and most approved Bibles. *Isidore Clarius* in his Preface to his Edition, complains that he found these holy Writings defaced with innumerable errors: *Eight thousand* of which, that he thought most material, he saith he amended; and yet lest he knew not how many lesser ones untouched: After which (the Council of *Trent* having vouched this Vulgar Latine Edition, for the onely authentick) Pope *Sixtus* the *Fifth*, published, out of the several Copies that were abroad, one which he straitly charged to be received, as the onely true Vulgar; from which none should dare to vary in a tittle. And yet two years were scarce passed, before *Clemens* the *Eighth*, found many defects and corruptions still remaining in that Edition: and therefore published another, with the very same charge, that none else should be received.

Which evidently shews they have suffered the holy Books to be so foully abused, that they know not how to amend the errors that are crept into them; nor can tell which is the true Bible. For these two Bibles thus equally authoris'd, as the onely authentick ones, abound not onely with manifest diversities; but with

contradictions, or contrarieties, one to the other. Whereby all Romanists are reduced to this miserable necessity, either to make use of no Bible at all; or to fall under the curse of *Sixtus* if he make use of that of *Clement*; or the curse of *Clement*, if he use the Bible of *Sixtus*. For they are both of them enjoined, with the exclusion of all other Editions; and with the penalty of a curse upon them, who disobey the one or the other: and it is impossible to obey both.

This might be sufficient to demonstrate how unfaithfull that Church hath been, in the weightiest concerns. Whereby all the members of it are plunged, beyond all power of redemption, into a dismal necessity, either of laying aside the Scriptures; or of offending against the sacred decrees (as they account them) of one or other of the heads of their Church (which some take to be infallible) and being accursed of them.

2. But for every one's fuller satisfaction, it may be fit farther to represent, how negligent they have been in preserving other Traditions, which were certainly once in the Church, but now utterly lost. There is no question to be made, but the Apostles taught the first Christians, the meaning of those hard places which we find in their, and other holy, Writings. But who can tell us where to find certainly so much as one of them? and therefore where is the fidelity of this Church, which boasts so much to be the keeper of sacred Traditions? For nothing is more desirable than those Apostolical interpretations of Scripture; nothing could be more usefull; and yet we have no hope to meet with them either there, or indeed any where else. Which is no reproach to other Churches, who do not pretend to more than is written; but reflects much upon them, and discredits them, who challenge the power of the whole Church intirely, and would pass not
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onely for the sole keepers and witnesses of Divine Truth; but for carefull preservers of it. For of what should they have been more carefull than of these usefull things; whereof they can tell us nothing? when of unprofitable Ceremonies they have most devoutly kept, if we could believe them, a very great number.

3. They tell us indeed of some doctrinal Traditions also which they have religiously preserved: but mark I beseech you with what sincerity. For to justifie these, they have forged great numbers of Writings, and Books under the name of such Authours, as it is evident had no hand in them: which is another reason why we cannot give credit to their reports, if we have no other authority. There are very few persons now that are ignorant how many *Decretal Epistles* of the ancient Bishops of *Rome* have been devised, to establish the Papal Empire: and how shamefully a Donation of *Constantine* hath been pretended, wherein he gave away the Roman Empire and all its rights to the Pope. Which puts me in mind (as a notorious proof of this) of the forgeries that are in the *Breviary* it self: where we reade of *Constantine's* Leprosie, and the cure of it by *Sylvester's* baptizing him (which are egregious Fables) and of the Decrees of the second Roman Synod under that Pope *Sylvester*; wherein the *Breviary* affirms *Photinus* was condemned: when all the world knows, that *Photinus* his Heresie did not spring up till divers years after the death of *Sylvester*. And there are so many other arguments which prove the Decrees of that *Synod* to be a vile forgery, that we may see, by the way, what reason they have to keep their Liturgy in an unknown Language: lest the people perceiving what untruths they are taught, instead of God's word, should abhor that Divine Service, as justly they might, which is stuffed with so many Fables.

It would be endless to shew how many passages they have foisted into ancient Writers to countenance their Traditions ; particularly about the Papal Supremacy : by which so great a man as *Thomas Aquinas* was deceived : who frequently quotes authorities, which are mere forgeries ; though not invented by him, I verily think , but imposed upon him by the fraud which had been long practised in that Church. For we find that the Canons of so famous and universally known *Council* as that of the first at *Nice*, have been falsely alledged even by Popes themselves. *Boniface* for instance, and *Zosimus* alledged a counterfeit *Nicene* Cañon to the African Bishops in the Sixth Council of *Carthage* : who to convince the false dealing of these Popes sought out with great labour and diligence, the ancient and authentick Copies of the *Nicene* Canons ; and having obtained them both from *Alexandria*, and from *Constantinople*, they found them for number and for sense to be the very same, which themselves already had ; but not one word in them, of what the *Popes* pretended. The same I might say of Pope *Innocent*, and others ; whom I purposely omit, because I study brevity.

4. And have this farther to add, that as they have pretended *Tradition* where there is none ; so where there is, they have left that *Tradition* : and therefore have no reason to expect that we should be governed by them in this matter ; who take the liberty to neglect, as they please, better Tradition than they would impose upon us. None are to be charged, with this, if it be a guilt, more than themselves. For instance the *three immersions* : i. e. dipping the persons three times in Baptism, was certainly an ancient practice ; and said by many Authours to be an Apostolical Tradition ; and to be ordained in signification of the blessed Trinity,

nity, into whose name they were baptised. And yet there is no such thing now in use, in their Church; no more than in ours: who justify our selves, as I shewed above, by a true opinion, that Rites and Ceremonies are not unalterable: which it is impossible for them to do, unless they will cease to press the necessity of other Traditions upon us, which never were so generally received, as this which is now abolished. To which may be added the custome of giving the *Eucharist to Infants*; which prevailed for several Ages; and is called by *S. Austin* an *Apostolical Tradition*: the custome of administering Baptism onely at *Easter* and *Whitsontide*; with a great heap more, which it would be too long to enumerate. Nor is it necessary I should trouble the Reader with them; these being sufficient to shew, the partiality of that Church in this matter: and that we have no reason to be tied to that, merely upon their Authority; which they will not observe, though having a far greater. Nay, all discreet persons may easily see, what a wide difference there is, between them who have abrogated such Traditions, as had long gone even in their Church, under the name of Apostolical; and us who therefore do not follow pretended Traditions now, because we believe them not to be *Apostolical*, but merely *Roman*. He is strangely blind, who doth not see how much more sincere this Church is, than that; in this regard.

5. Besides this, we can demonstrate, that as in these things they have forsaken Traditions, so in other cases they have perverted and abused them; turning them into quite another thing. As appears to all that understand any thing of ancient learning, in the business of *Purgatory*: which none of the most ancient Writers so much as dreamt to be such a place, as they have now devised: but onely asserted a *Purgatory Fire*,
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through which all, both good and bad, even the blessed Virgin her self, must pass; at the great and dreadful day of Judgment. This was the old *Tradition*, as we may call it, which was among Christians: which they have changed into such a *Tradition* as was among the Pagans.

6. But it is time to have done with this: else I should have insisted upon this a while, which I touched before and is of great moment: that *the Tradition which now runs in that Church is contrary to the certain Tradition of the Apostles and the universal Church*: particularly in the *Canon of Scripture*. In which no more Books have been numbred by the Catholick Church in all Ages, since the Apostles time, than are in the VI. Article of Religion in this Church of *England*: till the late Council of *Trent*, took the boldness to thrust the *Apocryphal Books* into the holy Canon; as nothing inferiour to the acknowledged Divine Writings. This hath been so evidently demonstrated by a late Reverend Prelate of our Church, in his *Scholastical History of the Canon of the Scriptures*, out of undoubted Records; that no fair Answer can be made to it.

But I must leave a little room for other things that ought to be noted.

III. And the next is a consequence from what hath been now said. That there being so little credit to be given to the Roman Church onely, we cannot receive those Doctrines for Truth, which that Church now presses upon our belief, upon the account of *Tradition*. For instance, that *the Church of Rome, is the Mother and Mistress of all other Churches*; that *the Pope of Rome is the Monarch or Head of the universal visible Church*; that *all Scriptures must be expounded according to the sense of this Church*; that *there are truly and properly*

perly seven Sacraments, neither more nor less, instituted by our blessed Lord himself in the New Testament; that there is a proper and propitiatory Sacrifice offered in the Mass for the quick and dead, the same that Christ offered on the Cross; in short, the *half Communion*, and all the rest of the Articles of their New Faith, in the Creed published by Pope Pius IV. which are Traditions of the *Roman Church* alone, not of the *Universal*: and rely solely upon their own Authority. And therefore we refuse them; and in our disputes about *Traditions*, we mean these things; which we reject because they have no foundation, either in the holy Scripture, or in Universal Tradition: but depend, as I said, upon the sole Authority of that Church, which witnesses in its own behalf.

For whatsoever is pretended, to make the better shew, all resolves at last into that; as I intimated in the beginning of this Discourse. *Scripture* and *Tradition* can do nothing at all for them; without their *Churches definition*. Though their whole infallible Rule of Faith seem to be made up of those *three*, yet in truth; the last of these alone, the *Churches definition*, is the whole Rule; and the very bottom upon which their Faith stands. For what is Tradition is no more apparent, than, what is Scripture, according to their principles, without the Authority of their Church: which pretends to an unlimited power to supply the defect even of *Tradition* it self.

In short, as Tradition among them is taken in to supply the defect of Scripture; so the Authority of their Church is taken in to supply the defect of Tradition: but this Authority undermines them both; because neither Scripture nor Tradition signifie any thing, without their Churches Authority. Which therefore, is the rule of their Faith: that is, they believe themselves.

To which absurdity they are driven ; because it is made evident by us that there have been great diversities of Traditions, and many changes and alterations made, even in things called Apostolical, &c. and therefore they have no other way, but to fly to the judgment of the present Roman Church, to determine what are Traditions Apostolical, and what are not : by which judgment all mankind must be governed ; that is, we must believe them ; and they believe themselves : which they would have done well to have said in one word ; without putting us to the trouble of seeking for Traditions in Books, and in other Churches. But they would willingly colour their pretences, by as many fair words, as is possible, and so make mention of *Scripture, Tradition, Antiquity* : which when we have examined, they will not stand to them ; but take sanctuary in their own Authority : saying they are the sole judges what is Scripture, and what Tradition, and what Antiquity ; nay have a power to declare any new point of Faith, which the Church never heard of before. This is the Doctrine of *Salmeron* and others of his fellows ; that *the Doctrine of Faith admits of additions in essential things. For all things were not taught by the Apostles, but such as were then necessary and fit for the Salvation of Believers.*

By which means we can never know, when the Christian Religion will be perfected : but their Church may bring in *Traditions* by its sole Authority, without end.

Nay, some among them have been contented to resolve all their Faith into the sole Authority of the present Roman Bishop : according to that famous saying of *Cornelius Mussus* (promoted by *Paul III.* to a Bishoprick) upon the *XIV.* Chapter to the *Romans* ; *to confess the truth ingenuously, I would give greater credit to*

one Pope, in those things which touch the mysteries of Faith; than to a thousand Hierom's, Austin's, Gregory's: to say nothing of Richard's, Scotus's, &c. for I believe and know that the Pope cannot err in matters of Faith. Which contemptuous speech he would never have uttered, to the discredit of those great men whom they pretend to reverence; if he had not known more certainly that the Tradition which runs among the ancient Fathers, is against them; than he could know the Pope to be infallible.

There is no Tradition, I am sure for that; nor for abundance of other things, which rest merely upon their own credit; as is fairly acknowledged in two great Articles of their present Creed by our Countryman Bishop Fisher with whose words I conclude this particular. *Many perhaps have the less confidence in Indulgences because their use seems to have been newer in the Church, and very lately found among Christians. To whom I answer, that it doth not appear certainly by whom they began to be first delivered. For the ancients make no mention, or very rare of Purgatory: and the Greeks to this very day do not believe it: nor was the belief either of Purgatory or of Indulgences, so necessary in the Primitive Church, as it is now. And as long as there was no care about Purgatory, no body sought for Indulgences: for all their esteem depends upon that. If you take away Purgatory to what purpose are Indulgences? Since therefore Purgatory was so lately known and received in the Catholick Church, who can wonder that there was no use of Indulgences in the beginning of our Religion?*

Which is a full confession what kind of Traditions that Church commends unto us: things lately invented; their own private opinions, of which the ancient Christians knew nothing. In one word, their Tradition,

tion, is no Tradition; in that sense wherein the Church always understood it.

IV. And what hath been said of them, must be applied to other particular Churches; though some have been more sincere than they. None of them hath any authority to commend any thing as an Article of Faith unto posterity; which hath not been commended to them by all foregoing Ages, derived from the Apostles. For *Vincentius* his Rule is to guide us all in this, *that is Catholick* (and consequently to be received) *which hath been held by all, and in all Churches, and at all times.*

V. Which puts me in mind of another thing to be briefly touched; that the Ecclesiastical Tradition contained in the Confessions or Registers of particular Churches in these days wherein we live; is not received by us, nor allowed to have the same Authority which such Tradition had at the time of the Nicene Council, for the conviction of Heresie. The joint consent I mean of so many Bishops as were there assembled, and the unanimous Confessions of so many several Churches of several Provinces as were there delivered, hath not now such a force to induce belief, as it had then. The reason of which is given by the same *Vincentius*, who so highly commends that way which was then taken, of reproving Heresie: but adds this most wise caution (in the last Chapter but one of the first Part of his *Commonitorium*) *but you must not think that all Heresies, and always are thus to be opposed; but onely new and fresh Heresies: when they first rise up, that is; before they have falsified the rules of the ancient Faith, &c. As for inveterate Heresies, which have spread themselves, they are in no wise to be assaulted this way: because in*
a long

a long tract of time many opportunities may have presented themselves to Hereticks, of stealing Truth, out of ancient Records, and of corrupting the Volumes of our Ancestours.

Which if it be applied to the present state of things, it is evident the Roman Church hath had such opportunities of falsifying Antiquity ever since the first acknowledgment of the *Papal Supremacy* that we cannot rely merely upon any written testimonies, or unwritten Traditions, which never so great a number of their Bishops met together shall produce: which amount not to so much as one legal Testimony: but they are to be look'd upon or suspected as a multitude of false *Witnesses*, conspiring together in their own cause.

How then, may some say, can Heresies of long standing be confuted? The same *Vincentius* resolves us in this, in the very next words, *We may convince them, if need be, by the sole authority of the Scriptures; or eschew them as already convicted and condemned in ancient times, by the general Councils of Catholick Priests.*

The Tradition which is found there, must direct all future Councils; not the opinions of their own present Churches.

VI. I will add but one thing more: which is, That the *Tradition* called *Oral*, because it comes by word of mouth from one Age to another, without any written record, is the most uncertain, and can be least relied upon, of all other. This hath been demonstrated sufficiently by the Writers of our Church, and there are such pregnant instances of the errors into which men have been led by it, that it needs no long discourse.

Two instances of it are very common, and I shall add a third.

1. The first is that which *Papias*, who lived presently after the Apostles times, and conversed with those who had seen them, set on foot. His way was, as *Eusebius* relates out of his Works, not so much to reade, as to inquire of the Elders, what Saint *Andrew*, or Saint *Peter* said ; what was the saying of Saint *Thomas*, Saint *James*, and the rest of the Disciples of our Lord. And he pretended that some of them told him, among other things, that after the resurrection of our Bodies, we shall reign a thousand years here upon Earth : which he gathered, saith *Eusebius*, from some saying of the Apostles wrong understood. But this fancy was embraced very greedily, and was taught for two whole Ages, as an *Apostolical Tradition* ; no body opposing it : and yet having nothing to say for it, but onely *the antiquity of the man* (as *Eusebius* his words are *L. III. Cap. ult.*) who delivered it to them : yet this *Tradition* hath been generally since taken for an imposture ; and teaches us no more than this ; that if one man could set a-going such a Doctrine, and make it pass so current for so long a time, upon no other pretence, than that an Apostle said so in private discourse ; we have great reason to think that other Traditions have had no better beginning, or not so good ; especially since they never so universally prevailed as that did.

2. A second instance is that famous contention about the observation of *Easter* ; which miserably afflicted the Church in the days of *Victor* Bishop of *Rome* : by dividing the Eastern Christians from the Western. One pretending Tradition from Saint *John*, and Saint *Philip* ; the other from Saint *Peter* and Saint *Paul*. Concerning which I will not say, as *Rigaltius* doth (in his sharp note upon the words of *Firmilian* ; who pretended Tradition for the rebaptizing of Hereticks) that *under the Names and Persons of great men, there*
were

were *foolish and sophistical things delivered for Apostolical Traditions, by fools and sophisters.* But this I affirm, that there are many more instances of mens forwardness, and they neither *fools* nor *sophisters*, but onely wedded to the opinions of their own Churches, to obtrude things as Apostolical, for which they had no proof at all. For when they knew not how to defend themselves, presently they flew to *Tradition Apostolical.*

3. A third instance of whose uncertainty we have in *Irenæus* (*L. II. C. 39.*) concerning the age of our blessed Saviour when he died: which he confidently affirms to have been forty, if not fifty years; and saith the Elders which knew Saint *John* and were his Scholars, received this relation from him. And yet all agree, that he beginning to preach at *thirty* years of age, was crucified about three years and an half after.

The like relation *Clemens* makes of his preaching but *one* year; which he calls a secret Tradition from the Apostles: but hath no more Truth in it, than the other.

Now if in the first Ages, when they were so near the fountain and beginning of Tradition men were deceived, nay such great men as these were deceived, and led others into errors in these matters: we cannot with any safety trust to Traditions, that have passed, men pretend, from one to another untill now: but we can find no mention of in any Writer, till some Ages after the Apostles; and then were by some-body or other, who had authority in those days, called Apostolical Traditions; merely to gain them the more credit. Thus *Andreas Cæsariensis* in his Commentaries upon the Book of *Revelation*, p. 743. saith that the coming of *Enoch* and *Elias* before the second coming of Christ (though it be not found in Scripture) was a
constant

constant report received by *Tradition without any variation*, from the teachers of the Church.

Which is sufficient to shew how ready they were to father their own private opinions, upon ancient universal Tradition: and how little reason we have to trust to that, which was so uncertain, even in the first Ages; and therefore must needs be more dubious now.

Thus I have endeavoured to lay before the eyes of those, who will be pleased to look over this short Treatise; what they are to think and speak about *Tradition*. It is a calumny to affirm that the Church of *England* rejects all Tradition; and I hope none of her true Children are so ignorant, as when they hear that word to imagine they must rise up and oppose it. No, the Scripture it self is a Tradition; and we admit all other Traditions which are subordinate, and agreeable unto that; together with all those things which can be proved to be Apostolical by the General Testimony of the Church in all Ages: nay, if any thing not contained in Scripture, which the Roman Church now pretends to be a part of God's word, were delivered to us, by as universal uncontrolled Tradition as the Scripture is, we should receive it as we do the Scripture.

But it appears plainly that such things were at first but private Opinions; which now are become the Doctrines of that particular Church: who would impose her Decrees upon us under the Venerable Name of Apostolical Universal Tradition: which I have shewn you hath been an ancient cheat; and that we ought not to be so easie as to be deceived by it. But to be very wary, and afraid of trusting the Traditions of such a Church, as hath not onely perverted some, abolished others, and pretended them where there hath been none: but been a very unfaithfull preserver of them

them and that in matters of great moment, where there were some; and *lastly* warfants those which it pretends to have kept, by nothing but its own infallibility. For which there is no *Tradition*: but much against it; even in the *Original Tradition*, the holy Scriptures: which plainly suppose the Roman Church may not onely err, but utterly fail and be cut off from the Body of Christ: As they that please may reade, who will consult the *Eleventh* Chapter to the *Romans*, v. 20, 21, 22. Of which they are in the greater danger, because they proudly claim so high a prerogative as that now mentioned; directly contrary to the Apostolical Admonition in that place: *be not high minded, but fear.*

C O N C L U S I O N.

I Shall end this Discourse with a brief Admonition, relating to our Christian practice.

And what is there more proper or more seasonable than this? While we reject all spurious Traditions, let us be sure to keep close to the genuine and true. Let us hold them fast, and not let them go.

Let us not dispute our selves out of all Religion while we condemn that which is false: Nor break all Christian Discipline and Order; because we cannot submit to all humane impositions.

In plain words, let us not throw off *Episcopacy*, together with the *Papal Tyranny*.

We ought to be the more carefull in observing the Divine Tradition delivered to us in the Scripture; and

according to the Scripture ; because we are not bound to other.

While we contend against the *half Communion* ; let us make a Conscience to receive the *whole* frequently. It looks like Faction, rather than Religion, to be earnest for that, which we mean not to use.

In like manner, while we look upon additions to the Scripture, as vain ; let us not neglect to read and ponder those holy Writings.

When we reject *Purgatory* as a fable ; let us really dread Hell fire.

And while we do not tie our selves to all usages that have been in the Church, let us be careful to observe, *first* all the substantial duties of righteousness, charity, sobriety and godliness, which are unquestionably delivered to us by our Lord himself and his holy Apostles : and *secondly* all the Ordinances of the Church wherein we live, which are not contrary to the word of God. For so hath the same Divine Authority delivered ; that the people should *obey* those that are their Guides and Governours ; *submitting* themselves to their authority ; and avoiding all *contention* with them, as most undecent in it self, and pernicious to Religion ; which suffers extremely, when neither *Ecclesiastical Authority*, nor *Ecclesiastical Customs* can end disputes about Rites and Ceremonies.

Read *1 Thess. V. 12. Heb. XIII. 17. 1 Cor. XI. 16.* and read such places, as you ought to do all the other Scriptures, till your hearts be deeply affected with them.

For be admonished, in the last place, of this ; which is of general use, and must never be forgotten : because we shall lose the benefit of that celestial Doctrine, which is delivered unto us, if we do not strictly observe it. That as this Evangelical Doctrine is delivered down to

us, so we must be delivered up to it. Thus Saint Paul teaches us to speak in VI. *Rom.* 17. where he thanks God that they who formerly had been servants of sin, did now obey from the heart that form of Doctrine, unto which they were delivered. So the words run in the Greek (as the Margin of our Bibles inform you) ἐκ τῆς παραδόδο. 2^o.

This is the *Tradition* which we must be sure to retain, and hold fast above all other; as that without which all our belief will be ineffectual.

This is the very end for which all Divine Truth is delivered unto us, that we may be delivered and make a surrender of our selves unto it.

Observe the force of the Apostles words: which tell us *first*, that there was a certain form of Christian Doctrine which the Apostles taught, compared here to a mould (so the word *τύπος*, *form*, may be translated) into which metal or such like matter is cast; that it may receive the figure and shape of that mould.

2. Now he compares the *Roman* Christians to such ductile, pliable matter: they being so delivered or cast into this form or mould of Christian Doctrine, that they were intirely framed and fashioned according to it: and had all the lineaments, as I may say, of it expressed upon their souls.

3. And having so received it, they were *obedient* to it: for without this, all the impressions, which by knowledge or faith were made upon their souls, were but an imperfect draught of what was intended in the Christian Tradition.

4. And it was *heartly* obedience; sincere compliance with the Divine will: such obedience as became those who understood their Religion to be a great deliverance and liberty from the slavery of sin (before spoken of) into the happy freedom of the service of God.

5. All which *lastly* he ascribes to the grace of God, which had both delivered to them that Doctrine, and drawn them to deliver up themselves to it; made their hearts soft and ductile to be cast into that mould; and quickned them to Christian Obedience; and given them a willing mind to obey chearfully. All this was from God's grace, and not their merits; and therefore the thanks was to be ascribed to him, who succeeds and blesses all pious indeavours.

Now according to this pattern, let us frame our selves: who, blessed be God, have a form of Doctrine delivered to us in this Church, exactly agreeable to the holy Scriptures: which lie open before us; and we are exhorted not onely to look into them, but we feel that grace which hath brought them to us, clearly demonstrating that we ought to be formed according to the holy Doctrine therein delivered, by the delivery of our selves unto it. By the delivery of our mind, that is, to think of God, and our selves, and of our duty in every point, just as this instructs us. And by the delivery of our wills and affections, to be governed and regulated, according to its directions. And when we have consented to this, we find the Divine grace representing to us the necessity of an hearty obedience, to what we know and believe and have embraced as the very Truth of God. To this we are continually drawn and mightily moved; and if we would shew our thankfulness for it, let us follow these godly motions, and conform our selves in all things to the heavenly prescriptions of this Book: being confident that if we do, we need not trouble our selves about any other model of Religion, which we find not here delivered.

For if you desire to know what *form of Doctrine* it is, to which the Apostle would have us delivered; it
is

is certain it is a Doctrine directly opposite to all vice and wickedness. For herein the grace of God was manifested, he tells the *Romans*, in that it had brought them, from being slaves of sin, heartily to obey the Christian Doctrine: which taught, that is, virtue and piety.

Now to this the present Romanists can pretend to add nothing. All the parts of a godly life are sufficiently taught us, in the holy Scriptures. And if we would seriously practise and follow this Doctrine, from the very heart; we should easily see there is no other but what is there delivered. For whatsoever is pretended to be necessary besides, is not a *Doctrine according unto godliness* (as the Apostle calls Christianity) but the very design of it is to open an easier way to heaven, than that laid before us in the holy Scriptures; by *Masses for the dead*, by *Indulgences*, by *Satisfactions*, and the *merits of the Saints*, and several other such like inventions: which have no foundation in the *Scriptures*; nor in true *Antiquity*.

That is a word indeed which is very much pretended. *Antiquity* they say is on their side; but it is nothing different from what hath been said about *Tradition*. And if we will run up to the true *Antiquity*, there is nothing so ancient as the *holy Scriptures*. They are the oldest Records of Religion: and by them if we frame our lives, we are sure it is according to the most authentick and ancient directions of piety, delivered in the holy Oracles of God. So both sides confess them to be. And if the old Rule be safe, *that is true, which is first*; we are safe enough: for there is nothing *before* this to be our Guide; and there can be nothing *after* this, but must be tried by it. According to another Rule, as old as reason itself;

self; *the first in every kind, is the measure of all the rest.* And, as sure as that there is a Gospel of God's grace, *they that walk after this Rule (this Divine Canon) peace shall be upon them, and mercy; they being the true Israel, or Church, of God.*

T H E E N D.

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